

Pesticide containers can be recycled

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Two million pounds of plastic pesticide containers no longer threaten Nebraska's environment and landscape.

That's the amount of empty, plastic pesticide containers a University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension program has helped collect and recycle from across Nebraska over the past 20 years.

"We're going to keep adding to that total as this very successful and collaborative program begins its 21st year," said UNL pesticide safety educator Clyde Ogg, who coordinates the program for the university's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The UNL program helps recycle 1- and 2.5-gallon plastic pesticide containers and 15-, 30- and 55-gallon plastic crop protection chemical drums.

"These are farm and ranch pesticide containers that might otherwise end up stored in barns or sheds or be improperly disposed of by casting them aside on creek banks or burning them," Ogg said. "The program's primary message has always been that it benefits everyone to find simple, cost-effective and cooperative ways to help properly dispose of these containers and keep them out of the environment and that message has been widely embraced."

Plastic from collected containers is turned into industrial and consumer products like shipping pallets, drain tile, dimension lumber and parking lot tire bumpers. Last year, the UNL program helped recycle about 35 tons of containers. A full list of recycling sites, guidelines and program information and details is on UNL's Pesticide Safety Education Program Web site at <http://pested.unl.edu/recycling>.

"Most of the (collection) sites are at agricultural chemical dealerships or community recycling centers, which volunteer to take on this additional responsibility," he said.

The program accepts pressure-rinsed or triple-rinsed 1- and 2.5-gallon plastic pesticide

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containers. They must be clean and drained, inside and out. Caps, labels and slipcover plastic labels must be removed since they cannot be recycled as part of the program. They should be disposed of as solid waste.

Of the 42 sites involved in the program, 26 accept 15-, 30- and 55-gallon plastic crop protection chemical, crop oil and adjuvant drums. These drums must be thoroughly rinsed before delivery to collection sites and should not be cut or opened in any way. Mini-bulk, saddle tanks and nurse tanks, which can be made of fiberglass or plastics not compatible with the recycling program, are not accepted.

Ten sites collect year-round, 12 collect May through August, 14 collect on specific dates and six are by appointment only.

Before delivery to collection sites, containers and drums should be cleaned, rinsed and drained. Rinsate should be returned to the spray tank. Remove and properly dispose of booklets and caps from containers and remove and properly dispose of plastic shrink-wraps. Glued-on paper labels can be left on the container.

Program funding is by a national coalition of agri-chemical manufacturers through the Agricultural Container Recycling Council, Washington, D.C.

Area county collection sites, by category, are listed below. Sites accepting 15-, 30- and 55-gallon plastic drums are noted.

Year-around collection sites:

Dawson County—All Points Cooperative, Lexington, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; accepts drums.

Lincoln County—City of North Platte Transfer Station, North Platte, Monday through Saturday 7

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a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sites collecting pesticide containers by appointment only:

Custer: Custer County Recycling Center, Broken Bow, (308) 870-0313; accepts drums.